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Retired Northeast Kingdom couple dismayed by Social Security clawback

By Ike Bendavid

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DERBY, Vt. (WCAX) - A retired Northeast Kingdom couple says they recently received a disturbing letter from the Social Security Administration saying they owe $11,000.

Christine Priest says she was going through the mail with her husband when they got an unwelcome surprise. “What I thought was our tax statement from the Social Security Administration... we open it up and it’s actually a bill for $11,000 that they stated they overpaid us in 2022,” Priest said.

She says her husband started collecting Social Security in September of 2022 but that the government says it mistakenly started making monthly payments to him six months earlier. “There was no notification to us that those checks were starting then,” Priest said.

They say because the payments were made through direct deposit, they didn’t notice the extra money in their account. Even though the government admits it was their mistake, they still insist the couple must return the overpayment.

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The Social Security officials issued a statement saying, “Getting an overpayment notice can be unsettling and we work with people to navigate the process. We inform people about the fact and amount of the overpayment, their right to appeal, and the options to repay or, in some cases, receive waivers of the debt.”

Priest and her husband have a meeting next week with Social Security and she says she is looking for a second job to pay back the money.

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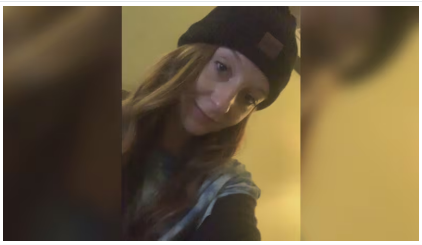

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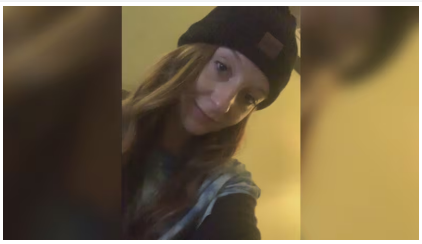

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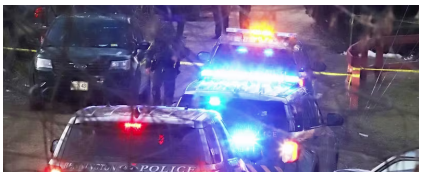

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